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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/CARC, EUR/ERA, EUR/RPM, IO/UNP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CY](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: CYPRIOTS TORN BETWEEN SUPPORTING RUSSIA, GEORGIA'S
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

REF: A. SECSTATE 86108

[1](#)B. USNATO 281

Classified By: Political Chief Gregory Macris, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) In response to Ref A, PolChief on August 12 demarched Cyprus MFA Russia Desk Officer Alkys Ieromonachou and Ministerial Counselor Charis Christodoulidou, emphasizing that the Euro-Atlantic community must act in concert to condemn Russian aggression in Georgia, demand an immediate cease-fire, and insist that Moscow withdraw its military forces from the entirety of Georgian territory. Ieromonachou was scrambling to prepare briefing materials for Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou, who was cutting short his holidays to attend the August 13 GAERC. He was focusing his drafting on a "who did what, when" timeline in response to the Minister's request, and lamented that authoritative information was difficult to obtain. Both the Georgian and Russian heads of mission had called on him that morning, and predictably offered accounts that differed 180 degrees. Ieromonachou accepted our points and promised to incorporate them into his briefer for Kyprianou. Evaluating our proposals for the GAERC statement, he ventured that Cyprus would back a strong expression of support for Georgian territorial integrity and sovereignty, an immediate demand for a cease-fire, commencement of negotiations that aimed for a lasting political settlement, and efforts to prevent a humanitarian disaster on the ground. Ieromonachou demurred when pressed whether Cyprus would publicly demand full Russian troop withdrawal from Georgia and/or urge that Brussels send Russia the message that its aggression in the Caucasus could damage long-term relations with the West. On the statement negotiation process, he doubted Cyprus would take a leadership role or risk isolation, thinking instead it would opt to follow consensus.

[1](#)2. (C) Christodoulidou, of late the Cypriot MFA's chief staffer at the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC), noted that no draft GAERC conclusions had yet been circulated. In formulating its position on the Georgia crisis, Minister Kyprianou would need to weigh Cyprus's historically close ties to Russia against its general support for sovereign nations' territorial integrity. Hinting at the direction Kyprianou might turn, Christodoulidou, while accepting that Russia's response to Georgian military operations in South Ossetia was not commensurate with its (Moscow's) stated objectives, cautioned that the West's response must also not be disproportionate. Cutting off high-level EU-Russia dialogue, as some of the "hard-line" EU member states were clamoring for, seemed counter-productive, she thought. Christodoulidou ventured that discussions at the PSC and subsequent GAERC would approximate those at the

August 11 NATO Political Committee meeting (Ref B), with many former East Bloc nations opting for tough language and others preaching a more balanced approach.

13. (C) COMMENT: Cyprus finds itself between the proverbial rock and hard place on Georgia, torn between its instinctive support for Moscow -- which has grown more intense since Communist AKEL party SG Demetris Christofias became president in February -- and its equally fervent backing of international law and smaller nations' territorial integrity.

Throw in fears that Ossetia and Abkhazia represent more precedent for large nations to recognize the breakaway "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," and you have a recipe for major policy indigestion in Nicosia. Our sense, however, is that Cyprus will fall into the "balanced approach" camp of EU member-states, supporting a statement that calls on all parties to the dispute to end hostilities and negotiate politically, but opposing efforts to assign blame or somehow punish Russia.

HADLEY